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ABSTRACT

This module is part of a training program for foster parents and foster care workers offered at Colorado State University. The module's learning objectives address: (1) the importance of biological parents' involvement to a foster child; (2) the relationship of biological parents' involvement to children's adjustment to foster care; (3) the foster parents' encouragement of visitation by a child's biological family; (4) biological parents' legal rights; and (5) foster parents' facilitation of biological parents' involvement in their child's foster care. This module consists of three lectures. Each lecture includes reading material and exercises for individuals or groups. Lecture 1 compares the expectations of foster and biological parents for biological parents' involvement in the foster child's life and lists reasons why such involvement is important. A vignette describes the different expectations of two sets of parents. Lecture 2 suggests ways in which biological parents can be involved in foster care. Lecture 3 considers the problems and benefits of visitation by biological parents. Three vignettes illustrate these problems and benefits. A list of seven suggested readings is provided. A five-page form for evaluating the module is included. (BC)

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FOSTERING FAMILIES

Guidelines for Foster Parent-Birth Parent Involvement

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Designed in Consultation with the Colorado Department of Social Services
Under Grant Number C950405

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FOSTERING FAMILIES

A Specialized Training Program
Designed for
Foster Care Workers & Foster Care Parents

GUIDELINES FOR FOSTER PARENT–BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

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Designed in consultation with
The Colorado Department of Social Services
Under Grant No. C 951209

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FOSTERING FAMILIES

is a unique opportunity for foster care parents and foster care workers to explore the many complex aspects of the foster care delivery system.

is a training program designed to be comprehensive in its approach to educating those people most important to the success of foster care.

is specially designed 3 hour sessions to meet the varying learning and educational needs of foster care providers.

is designed to foster "a partnership of skill" to effect quality care for families and children in distress.

is offered, in specific levels, as upper-division college classwork in the Social Work Department done in concert with the Division of Continuing Education at Colorado State University.

is a collaborative project with the Colorado Department of Social Services and supported with funds from Title IV-E and Colorado State University.

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GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

BIOLOGICAL PARENT	This term actually refers to the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) currently raising and responsible for the child(ren). This term is used interchangeably with the term "birth parent" or"family of origin."
BIOLOGICAL FAMILY	The foster childs family or close relatives including his/her biological parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc. The term may also refer to non-relatives with whom the child has had a meaningful relationship (e.g., long time friend of biological family).
DEFENSE MECHANISMS	A mental process of the go to protect the personality of a person. Generally thought to be unconscious, defense mechanisms protect the person in loss and emotional pain.
FILIAL DEPRIVATION	A pattern of emotional and behavioral reactions commonly observed among parents who are separated from their children. These reactions usually include stages such as shock, anger or protest, depression, despair, and eventually adjustment. Filial deprivation is the biological parents equivalent to parental deprivation reactions observed among children who go through stages in adjusting to separation and loss.
PARENTAL RIGHTS	The rights of a legal parent rooted in and protected by the United States Constitution and reinforced by case law (litigation). These rights include physical possession of the child, day-to-day care and companionship, right to discipline the child, right to instill in the child the parents moral, religious, and ethical standards, right to control childs property, right to have child hear parents name, and right to prevent adoption of child without parents consent.

VISITATION — This refers to face-to-face communication between the biological parent and theit child(ren) in foster care. Visits may be in the foster parents home, at tahe agency, or some other agreed upon location. When necessary to assure protection of the child, the visits may be superivsed by an agency or court representative.

PERMANENCE — Through a process of case review and case management, decisions are reached in order to get children to more settled and permanent home situations which may include reunification with their family of origin, adooption, or long-term foster care.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the importance of biological parent involvement to the child.

2. To examine key aspects of how biological parent(s) involvement relates to the child's adjustment in foster care.

3. To understand the expectations of social services for foster parent(s) to both permit and encourage visitation involvement by member(s) of the foster childs birth family.

4. To identify the biological parent(s) legal rights to visit their child in foster care.

5. To identify ways in which the foster parent can facilitate biological parents visitation and involvement in the foster care of his/her child.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

LECTURETTE #1
DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS

Whenever there is a discussion of biological parent involvement and visitation, some foster parents may feel like asking, "Why on earth would you want to involve the biological parent--haven't the parents done enough damage already?" For the foster parent who has seen the effects of a destructive parent/child relationship, that is a good question illustrating a normal human feeling. There are, however, four major reasons why biological parent involvement is important--even when the biological parent/child relationship leaves much to be desired.

First, we must remember that most children entering foster care will eventually return to their biological parents. Thus, a primary reason for involvement is to make possible those experiences that can prepare both the child and the biological parent for reunification.

Even if reunification is not possible, biological parent involvement is important. For example, in those relative rare instances where termination of parental rights is indicated and legally possible, it is fair to say that a conscientious judge will not and should not consider termination without a good deal of documentation showing that the agency made an active and reasonable effort to help the biological parent modify their behavior or situation so they can provide an acceptable level of child care.

Group or Individual Activity:

Discuss what involvement birth families might have with foster parents. Include specific experiences you have had as a foster parent or caseworker.

It is usually impossible for an agency to assemble that documentation without many months and even years of providing opportunities for the biological parent to demonstrate they can care for the child. Thus, even if a case is heading toward termination, we must give attention to parent involvement.

A second reason for parent involvement relates to federal law and policy. Public Law 96-272 (Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980) is a national effort to promote parental involvement in order to provide permanence for children.

This landmark legislation acknowledged the need to involve families in their children's placement process. A case review system must assure that "each child has a case plan designed to achieve placement in the least restrictive (most family-like) setting available and in close proximity to the parents home, consistent with the best interest and special needs of the child."

a third important reason for parent involvement relates to the child's psychological adjustment while in care. Data from the 1978 Fanshel and Shinn longitudinal study of foster children tells us that parent involvement--as expressed in frequent visitation--is directly related to a favorable emotional and psychological adjustment.

In summarizing their findings after a study of 624 foster children (up to age 12 at time study began), Fanshel and Shinn (1978) state the following:

"In the main, we strongly support the notion that continued contact with parents, even when the functioning of the latter is marginal, is good for most foster children. Our data suggest that total abandonment by parents is associated with evidence of emotional turmoil in children. We can think of no more profound insult to a childs personality than evidence that the parent thinks so little of the relationship with him that there is no motivation to visit and see how he is fairing. Good care in the hands of loving foster parents or institutional child care staff can mitigate the insult but cannot fully compensate for it."

We need to remember that the parent-child bond is amazingly powerful.

A <u>fourth</u> critical reason for parent involvement centers on the issue of legal rights and responsibilities. Until parental rights are terminated by a court, the parent has a legal right to be with his or her child and the child has a right to be with his or her parents.

Out of respect for those basic rights, we facilitate parent-child contact and avoid doing anything that creates a barrier to the exercise of those rights. Certainly this is often difficult for a foster parent or caseworker to facilitate the exercise of the parents right to be with the child when it appears as if the child is being further hurt by a destructive parent. Nevertheless, we have to support the rules of our legal system and hope that the majority of children, parents, and families are well served by these legal principles.

Perhaps more important than the parent right to be involved is the fact that they have a responsibility to be involved. They are the childs parent. They have a responsibility to advocate for needed services for their child. Thus, we need to convey to the biological parent our recognition that they are the childs parent and that we expect them to be a responsible parent. Among other thing, that means being continuously involved with their child while he or she is in placement.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

VIGNETTE #1
DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS

During an initial application interview with a foster care worker, a prospective foster parent, Mrs. Smith, expresses an interest in becoming a foster parent so "we can provide a good home to children that are not loved by anyone else." The foster care worker explains that there is a real need for foster parents but goes on to explain that typically the foster parents must be involved with the child's biological parents and facilitate visitation by the biological parents.

Worker: Could you tell me why you are interested in becoming a foster parent?

Foster Parent: Well, we have room in our home and we think we can love a child that comes into our home. We realize that most foster children have been abused or neglected and we think our love can make up for the fact that the child does not have parents that love him.

Worker: It's true that most of our children have been abused or neglected. However, most foster children are still quite attached to their biological parents and most biological parents will want to visit their children while they are in foster care.

Foster Parent: Oh, I didn't know that. I didn't think we would have to have contact with the parents.

Worker: Yes, our agency does expect foster parents to permit and actually encourage visitation and involvement by the child's parent.

Foster Parent: I really don't understand why they have to be involved. I would think a child would be scared to be around someone that had hurt him.

Worker: I can understand why you might think that but we find that the child in foster care really misses his parents and often worries about them. While the visits are sometimes upsetting to the child, in the long run visits by the parent seems to help the child make a better adjustment to a difficult situation.

Foster Parent: Well, I really don't like the idea of the child's parent - a stranger - in my house. If that is the case, I am not sure we want to be foster parents.

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VIGNETTE #1
DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS

Some Discussion Questions:

1. How soon after placement should a birth parent see their child(ren)?

2. What preparation should a foster parent have to work effectively with birth parents?

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EXERCISE #1

Brainstorming Ways to Achieve
Greater Birth Parent Involvement

The chart below provides a starting point to discussing how we can help birth parents achieve greater involvement with their child(ren) in placement. Brainstorm other ideas to add to the left hand column. Use the right hand column to explore barrier(s) that might exist.

Types of Involvement Available to Birth Parent for Child(ren) in Placement	Possible Barriers to Implementing the Type of Involvement
1. Participating with their child in preplacement, visits to foster family home, group home, or child care facility.	
2. Regular visits during placement.	
3. Paying the cost of foster care-to the greatest extent possible.	
4. Physically caring for the child during visits (feeding, dressing, etc.).	
5. Developing photo album, family scrapbook, or life book for child.	
6. Accompany child to medical and dental appointments.	
7. Accompany child on shopping trips for school clothing.	
8. Participating in school conferences.	
9. Working closely with foster parent, social worker, or other professionals in the assessment and treatment of childs behavioral or medical problems.	
10. Participating in development of case plan and in all case review.	
11. Participate, often with foster parents, in childs birthday parties, holiday celebrations, graduations, ceremonies, picnics, etc.	
12. Assisting in the training of social workers and foster parents.	

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES WHEN WORKING WITH BIRTH PARENTS

Chart A

1. When working with birth parents, creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect addresses the "spirit" in which work can proceed.

2. Sustaining a family-centered focus rather than solely a child-centered focus addresses the entire system-in-need and increases the likelihood of permanency planning.

3. To achieve greater ease in working with birth parents, we must use a broad array of communication skills and techniques, understanding the complexity of the communication process.

4. Power, control and hierarchy are issues inherent in the foster-ing arrangement. In working with birth parents, we must empower birth parents rather than diminish them, offer opportunities to gain control of change, and succeed within hierarchial structures.

5. In working with birth parents, we must strive for a large measure of objectivity and minimize "active" judgement, especially in pressure situation.

6. Being *realistic* is critical to effective work with birth parents. Generally, being realistic requires an understanding that what is expected of birth parent(s) is a degree of progress, not total recovery, perfection, or "cure."

FOSTERING FAMILIES

Biological Parent Involvement

LECTURETTE #2

What then are we talking about when we refer to biological parent involvement? Blumenthal (1984) explains that parent involvement means:

"the inclusion and/or participation of mothers and fathers in activities, tasks, services, and decision making throughout the time family is involved with the foster care process. Parents must interact with children, foster parents, caseworkers, child care staff, other professionals, paraprofessionals, and/or informal helpers... The concept of active role is critical. Parents are not to be merely talked to, taught, or planned for but rather are to be significant contributors who are expected and encouraged to share their ideas, reactions, and feelings."

Involvement by the biological parents in foster care can take many forms. On the following page, we can consider the types of activities available and discuss possible barriers to birth parent involvement.

Individual or Group Activity:

In what specific ways can birth parents be more involved in foster care?

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SOME PRINCIPLES FOR HELPING BIOLOGICAL PARENTS

Evelyn Felker - a foster parent - suggests a number of ways which foster parents can help biological parents. The following are excerpted and modified from her book.

1. Support the efforts of the parent to be a parent.

   * help the parent(s) be parents when they are in their visit
   * find positions to emphasize

2. Play second fiddle to the parents.

   * stand back, leave a lot of distance
   * don't try to decide everything

3. Do not play games.

   * be clear, consistent
   * if you feel squeezed for some reason, think before you react

4. Be honest with the parents.

   * don't hide problems that can be addressed by parents
   * talk about disappointments they may have caused such as missing a home visit with their child

5. Support the caseworker-parent relationship.

   * let the parent know you honor that relationship
   * be positive about the worker

6. Do not overreact to criticism.

   * use a sense of being a "trained" professional
   * don't react, think through your own emotions and your thoughts so you feel confident
   * examine why's and how's

Source: Judith A.B. Lee and D.N. Park. Walk a Mile in My Shoes

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LECTURETTE #3

VISITATION

It is through a face-to-face foster care visit that the biological parents and child encounter the reality of their situation and come to see more clearly what can and cannot be changed. The reasons for the placement and the separation surface once again; the parents and the child must grapple with their feelings about each other and the future of their relationship. This is not a pleasant task, but it is a necessary one. Even when visits are emotionally upsetting for all concerned (parent, child, foster parents, and caseworker), the visit seems to have a long-term beneficial effect on the child in care. Despite all the short run turmoil associated with the visitation, the available research tells us that in the long run, parent involvement facilitates positive adjustment for the child.

Needless to say, parental visiting and involvement have their problems but despite the existence of associated problems visiting is of utmost importance. Visits, of course, may create stress for everyone involved. There are children who are overwhelmed by anxiety each time they see their parents. Some are upset by their parents' unpredictable or undisturbed bahavior. Some children may become extremely unahppy and difficult to manage after visits. There are parents who may be hostile toward and critical of their children or the foster parents.

Group or Individual Activity:

Read the story entitled "Walk a Mile in My Shoes." Discuss.

Some will be argumentative, uncooperative, or unpredictable. A few may even try to sabotage the work of foster parents and the agency.

Nevertheless, both despite these problems and because of them, we want to stress how important it is for foster parents and agencies to strongly encourage parental visiting. We must always remember the important benefits that derive from parent-child visiting and weigh them against the various problems that such visiting creates. In all but a few cases, the benefits will far outweigh the disadvantages. We must be careful never to overreact to troublesome visits by trying to end visitation all together.

In the vast majority of cases, visits by the childs parents facilitate the adjustment during foater care. If the parent has been hospitalized or imprisioned, for example, a visit to the parent helps the child understand the reasons behind the separation and placement. Even disruptive visits by drunk or mentally ill parents help the child to more accurately perceive reality and understand that his or her parent is not able to provide a home at this particular time. If the child is not given an opportunity to confront and struggle with the reality related to placement in foster care, fantasy may delay or distort the adjustment process.

LECTURETTE #3

VISITATION (Continued)

Troublesome Visits

There are rarely good reasons for restricting parent visitation or parent involvement. But restriction should be imposed on a case-by-case basis. There should not be blanket restrictions imposed on all. Social workers need to develop a written contract with the parent specifying what behaviors are not acceptable if visiting is to occur. If the visitation contract does not have an impact on the parents behavior, then supervised visits are the next alternative. Ideally, those visits can be observed through a one-way mirror.

Most biological parents living in rural areas or small communities know where their children are living--even when the agency has taken steps to keep this information a secret. Thus, most biological parents are capable of creating an opportunity to meet their child on the street near school, at the neighborhood store, etc. We think it is better for the child to have contact with the really destructive parent during a supervised visit rather than encountering the parent on the street when the child is completely unprepared for the contact and has no one to talk to afterward.

Group or Individual Activity:

Examine Vignettes 2,3, and 4. Discuss these using the questions provided.

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LECTURETTE #3

VISITATION (Continued)

For most foster children, visitation has several benefits:

- no matter how troubled or difficult the parents may be, the child may miss them deeply. They are his roots to his past. When he is separated from them, he feels that he has lost a part of himself;

-continuing contact with natural parents has an ameliorative effect on the otherwise detrimental consequesnces of long-term foster care;

- visits help calm some of the childs irrational separation fears; fears such as the parents are dead, the parents placed the child because they hated him or he was unimportant to them, etc.;

-visits may be therapeutic for the parents if the worker uses them to help the parents be better parents to the placed child, to bring out their "best" when they are with the child;

- if a child is to be returned to his family, visiting is absolutely essential. A child will experience innmuerable problems if he is returning to a family where he has become a stranger.

Group or Individual Activity:

1) What are questions regarding placement that a new foster care child might ask?

2) How would you respond?

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WALK A MILE IN MY SHOES

By Judith A.B. Lee
& D.N. Park

Mrs. Adams:

".....The fact that you are visiting your child in a foster home is a reminder you are, at least for the time being, a failure as a parent. You are very sensitive, especially during the first visits. Sometimes a foster parent, in a well-meaning effort to let you know that your child is doing well in a foster home, will make comments on how well the child is eating, how neat he keeps himself and his room, how happy he is, etc. To me, this type of remark was just an implied criticism of the care I had given my child, and was a verbal slap in the face....

It would have been easier to talk to my children if I had been kept up to date on what they had been doing. I understand that frequent phone calls can be very disruptive, but perhaps if a foster parent could just have dropped a brief note on a postcard once a week, it would have made communication between my child and me less strained....

It is surprising how many legitimate excuses you can come up with to avoid visiting your children in foster homes. Sometimes a failure to visit frequently on the part of the natural parents is not an indication that they don't care, but that they care too much....

You see your child in a home situation where everything is apparently orderly and calm and quiet, often materially superior to anything you are going to be able to offer them, and you wonder why the hell you are bothering to rock the boat...sometimes staying away is the easiest for everyone; but when your whole life has been torn up and you are somehow trying to reassemble the pieces, I don't see how thing could be easy....

The foster parent who gives you orders and instructions in the presence of your child is another problem. You are told that you should have the child back in the foster home at 5 o'clock, and admonished not to be late; or you are told to be sure little Tommy doesn't go outside without his sweater, as he has just recovered from a cold. These instructions may be necessary but your kid, no matter how young, is already aware of the fact that you have little authority at the time, and this only increases the child's concern as to how responsible you are. If it is necessary to give the natural parent instructions about taking the child away from the foster home on an outing, it would be better to do so out of the child's presence....

No matter how courteous a foster parent is, the natural parents still have the feeling that they have very little to say in the decisions made for their child. There is no reason why the natural parents can't be consulted on some of the decisions regarding the child, even if they are only small ones, such as the color of a soon-to-be purchased coat, or the advisability of getting a haircut. Being asked your opinion on matters concerning your child is a step toward the time when you will be making decisions yourself again, and will help restore your confidence in your ability to do so. I think it is the responsibility of both the social worker and the child's foster parent to involve the natural parent even if she doesn't show too much interest in being involved....

Another mother told her story this way:

"You're going to visit your children in somebody else's home. They are doing what you should be able to do for them. The guilt complex is overwhelming. You just can't describe it--walking into a house an having your children call somebody else Mommy and Daddy. You want them too. You want them to be treated as their own children. You want them to call them Mommy and Daddy, to feel this much relaxed with them, to go to them with their problems, but you don't want it. You are their mother. They are nothing but caretakers for the children, and this is very difficult to face. But I walked in the house anyway; I walked in the first foster parents house that I walked into and was...Bless this woman, bless Lucille. I knocked on the door and the kids opened the door because they were expecting me and they went, "Mommy, Mommy," and they jumped all around me and I stood there stiffly afraid to walk in the front door.

She was in the kitchen. She said, "Hi, come right in. The coffee's on the stove, the cups are up here--grab a cup. Sit down and we'll talk." Like I was a neighbor, not like I was company coming to visit her home. Like I was a neighbor, this was something I did every day. I walked in and grabbed a coffee cup off the shelf, poured myself a cup, and it totally relaxed me.

I think it might have scared me away if they had been dressed up as if it were a Sunday afternoon visit, had ushered me into the parlor where I sat there very stiffly and said to my children, "How do you do?" But here I was taken as a friend. I was not asked questions, not even, "How are you doing?" We talked about the weather and I don't really remember vividly, but I remember the conversations were very general. It was like two neighbors sitting down and talking.

She suggested to the children that they bring me outside to show me some pets that they had in the backyard, to give me a chance to be with my children without her making some excuse --"Well, I'll go upstairs and powder my nose." Bless this woman, Lucille....

FOSTERING FAMILIES

VIGNETTE #2
Christmas With Mother

Overview

Mary, age 5, is living with foster parents, Sarah and Al. Mary has been with them since age one.

Yesterday, the agency social worker informed Sarah and Al that Mary would be spending Christmas with her biological mother. The foster parents are angry and upset.

Foster Mother: Al, I'm so mad I could scream! Imagine the nerve of that social worker - telling us that Mary would spend Christmas with her mother. She's our baby - her so called real "mother" isn't fit to touch her.

Foster Father: I just don't understand. We've had her since she was one year old. We are now her mother and father and have been for four years. Remember how dirty and hungry and frightened Mary was when the social worker brought her to us? That social worker doesn't know what's going on! She's never seen how that crazy woman acts.

Foster Mother: Remember how "that mother" acted when she came to the house last week half drunk! She couldn't talk straight -poor Mary was frightened to death. I didn't want to let her in but she made such a fuss I didn't have a choice. She's not to be trusted. (Begins to cry)

Foster Father: Now Sarah, don't get upset. Let's wait and see what happens. Maybe it will all work out. The social worker must know Mary's mother isn't ready to assume responsibilities yet.

Foster Mother: If she know that, why is she telling us to give Mary to her mother for Christmas?

Foster Father: Well, I don't know. By the way, did you tell the social worker about how strange Mary's mother acted last week?

Foster Mother: No, I started to but decided not too. That social worker isn't going to do anything about it anyway. Besides, she'll probably blame us for not being able to handle the problem in the right way.

Foster Father: Sarah, I think you should tell the social worker. Maybe she would change her mind about the visit if we shared what we know with her.

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Christmas With Mother (Cont'd)

Foster Mother: I never have liked that social worker from day one. When she brought Mary to us four years ago, she didn't know anything about the child and she wouldnd't tell us why Mary was abandonded by her mother. We've gotten along without the social worker for four years and we can protect Mary from that no-good mother of hers.

Foster Father: As far as I'm concerned, that woman gave up her parental rights to Mary the day we started taking care of her. How can a person like that go unpunished? We've been everything to Mary. Who cared for her when she was sick? Who laughs and plays with her? We do! It's not fair that we have to share her at Christmas time.

Foster Mother: There isn't anything she can do for Mary! Why couldn't she have disappeared permanently?

Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel about this situation?

2. Do you think Sarah and Al have a right to be upset and angry? Why? Why not?

3. Do you think Sarah and Al are trying to undermine or destroy the relationship between Mary and her biological mother? If yes, what are your thoughts about it?

4. What might have been done to prevent this troublesome situation?

5. Does this situation suggest the existence of a communication problem between the social worker and the foster parents?

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VIGNETTE #3
NO SHOW

Overview

Foster child (Jimmy) is waiting for his biological mother to visit. Jimmy's mother is an alcoholic. Jimmy, age 10, gets dressed up and looks forward to spending a couple of hours with his mother. He has set out papers from school and is prepared to tell his mother about his school work, classmates, and teacher. Jimmy waits and waits but she never comes. She was to come at 2:00 pm. At 4:00 pm he begins to cry and tears up his school papers.

Jimmy: (laying out school papers) Mommy will be proud of me. I am doing real good in school. I hope she comes soon.

Foster Parent: I am sure she will enjoy seeing your school work and hearing about your new activities. You have been a very busy boy since she visited three weeks ago.

(2 hours later)

Jimmy: I wonder what happened to my mother. Maybe she got a new job and couldn't get time off. Or maybe the cab driver couldn't find this house. Maybe she didn't come because I didn't do well on my spelling test.

(Jimmy begins to sob and then in a fit of anger tears up his school papers and kicks the furniture and then throws a school book at the foster mother.)

Discussion Questions

1. How do you feel about this situation?

2. What do you think is the reason for Jimmy's outburst?

3. How would you respond to Jimmy's behavior: What would you say or do?

4. What are some possible reasons why this biological mother or other biological parents might not show up for a scheduled visit?

5. What might a foster parent do to increase the chances that a biological parent will visit his/her child in foster care?

FOSTERING FAMILIES

VIGNETTE #4
A CHILD'S PLEA

Overview

After a visit with her 8 year old daughter, Susan, who is in the foster home, the biological mother and the social worker prepare to leave. Susan becomes hysterical and clings to her biological mother and begs her to take her. When the biological mother says that it is not possible, Susan says she has been beaten by the foster father and that the foster mother does not feed her.

Biological Mother: I wish I could stay longer Susan, but I have to get to my job at the cafe. Mrs. Johnson (the social worker) and I have to leave now.

Social Worker: (to foster mother and Susan) This has been a good meeting. I think we have agreed on some plans that will be helpful to all of us. I am glad we were able to get together for this meeting.

(Mrs. Johnson and biological mother get up to leave)

Susan: (screaming) No! No! Don't leave. Take me with you. Please don't leave me here. I am afraid to stay here. She (points at foster mother) won't give me enough to eat and my foster father hits me. Please take me with you.

Discussion Questions

1. What feelings do you have in reaction to this situation?

2. What is the role of the social worker in this situation?

3. How do you explain Susan's behavior?

4. What should the foster parent say or do?

FOSTERING FAMILIES

KEY POINTS

1. Most children placed in foster care will eventually return home. Therefore, visitation and other forms of personal contact by biological parents with their child(ren) is significant to successful reunification.

2. Permanence is a concept important to foster care. Through laws and professional practices, the right of a child to permanence means a child will no longer be in temporary placement for long periods of time.

3. Until the rights of biological parents are terminated, they have rights to be with and plan for their child(ren).

4. "Filial" or "parental" deprivation is a concept that describes the feelings of loss biological parents experience when they are separated from their child(ren).

5. Caseworkers and foster parents can, and often do, become important "teachers" and role models for birth parents through a supportive teaching process.

6. Visitation and other forms of birth parent involvement give parents and active role in the decision-making process regarding their child's well-being.

7. Problems arise in the visitation and involvement of birth parents. Problems exist because parents are often in crisis themselves. They may lack resources such as transportation. They may be emotionally in distress.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

SUGGESTED READINGS AND RESOURCES

To learn more about the role of birth families in the foster care process:

Horejsi, Charles, Anne Bertsche, and Frank Clark. Social Work Practice with Parents of Children in Foster Care: A Handbook, IL: Charles C. Thomas, Inc., 1981. This book has a wonderful self-assessment inventory for the parent of a child in foster care (Appendix D).

Maluccio, Anthony and Paula Shinanoglu, eds. The Challenge of Partnership: Working with Parents of Children in Foster Care, NY: Child Welfare League of America, 1981. A collection of articles by various authors which focuses on the roles of biological parents in the foster care process.

To explore the feelings of the birth families of children in foster care:

Mandelbaum, Arthur. "Parent-Child Separation: Its Significance to Parents" in Sinanoglu, P.A. and A.N. Maluccio (eds) Parents of Children in Placement, NY: CWLA, 1981, Chapter 18, pp. 313-325. This chapter explores the variety of reactions that biological parents have to the out-of-home placement of their child(ren).

Jenkins, S. and E. Norman. "Families of Children in Foster Care," Children, 1969, pp. 155-159. Although not recent, this article provides a good overview of the feelings and attitudes experienced by the parents of children in foster care.

For more information on working with birth families:

Ryan, Patricia, E.J. McFadden, and B.L. Warren. Foster Families: A Resource for Helping Biological Parents, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, DHHS Pub. # (OHDS) 81-30307, April 1981. A booklet geared toward foster families as professionals and the ways in which they can work with biological parents.

SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES (CONT'D)

Kufeldt, Kathleen. "Including Natural Parents in Temporary Foster Care: An Exploratory Study," Children Today, 11 (September-October, 1982), pp. 14-16. A study of foster care situations which examines inclusion of biological parents in decisions made regarding their child; this position is seen as important in temporary foster care.

To learn more about the role of parental visitation in foster care:

Blumenthal, Karen and Anita Weinberg. "Issues Concerning Parental Visiting of Children in Foster Care." In Foster Children in the Courts, edited by Mark Hardin and G. Diane Dodson, Newton Upper Falls, MA: Butterworth Legal Publishers, 1983. This chapter explores many aspects of parental visitation.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

Colorado State University
Application for Partial Credit

Module No.: SW _ _ _-_ _ _

Name: _____ Soc. Sec. #: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

_____
(city) (state) (zip)

Grading: Pass/Fail (unless otherwise requested)

The Social Work Department at Colorado State University will grant university credit for each six different modules of training completed. Applications for credit must be made at the Time of Each Module Training ONLY. All work carried out in the modules must meet general academic standards of Colorado State. Written materials must be submitted and receive satisfactory grading for credit to be awarded. These applications will be held until the applicant completes his/her sixth module training. At this point, s/he will be able to formally register through the Division of Continuing Education for 1 credit hour. One credit hour of these modules costs $90.

FOSTERING FAMILIES

GUIDELINES FOR FOSTER PARENT–BIRTH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

EVALUATION BY PARTICIPANTS

The following items are designed to assess your satisfaction with the training as well as the effectiveness of the training design and materials. Please use the following scale and circle your response.

1 - not well addressed in the training
2 - not as adequately addressed as necessary
3 - adequate; given sufficient attention
4 - well addressed in the training
5 - very well addressed in the training

		Not Well Addressed				Very Well Addressed
1.	To understand the importance of biological parent involvement to the child	1	2	3	4	5
2.	To examine key aspects of how biological parent(s) involvement relates to the child's adjustment in foster care	1	2	3	4	5
3.	To understand the expectations of social services for foster parent(s) to both permit and encourage visitation involvement by member(s) of the foster childs birth family	1	2	3	4	5
4.	To identify the biological parent(s) legal rights to visit their child in foster care	1	2	3	4	5
5.	To identify ways in which the foster parent can facilitate biological parents visitation and involvement in the foster care of his/her child	1	2	3	4	5

B. The following items relate to program aspects of the training module. Please rate these items on the following scale. Any additional comments are welcome in the space provided after the question.

1 - Very Poor
2 - Poor
3 - Adequate
4 - Good
5 - Very Good

	Very Poor	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very Good
1. The length of the training..... (Was the material covered in the time allotted?)	1	2	3	4	5
2. Usefulness of training manual.....	1	2	3	4	5
3. Participant responsiveness.....	1	2	3	4	5
4. Your ability to participate expressing your ideas, feelings, and concerns.....	1	2	3	4	5
5. Your interest in the training session.....	1	2	3	4	5
6. Your comprehension of the material presented.....	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS: Please be specific:_____

C. We are interested in your feedback about our trainer, co-trainer(s). With this feedback we can continue to improve our sessions.

1 - Totally inadequate and ineffective
2 - Generally inadequate and ineffective
3 - About half and half
4 - Usually adequate and effective
5 - Highly adequate and effective

	Totally Ineffective/ Inadequate		0		Highly Effective/ Adequate
1. Knowledge/mastery of the subject matter.....	1	2	3	4	5
2. Preparation.....	1	2	3	4	5
3. Ability to communicate.....	1	2	3	4	5
4. Style of presentation.....	1	2	3	4	5
5. Enthusiasm/interest in subject matter.....	1	2	3	4	5
6. Overall performance.....	1	2	3	4	5
7. Ability to facilitate.....	1	2	3	4	5

8. In general, what would you identify as the strengths of trainer(s)?

9. In general, what would you identify as the deficiencies of trainer(s)?

D. The training setting is obviously an important aspect of a sessions success. We are interested in your feedback regarding the location, room, etc., and again welcome any comments or suggestions.

	Very Poor	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very Good
1. Setting appropriate for concentration, i.e., distraction, noise, temperature.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Setting conducive for participation.	1	2	3	4	5

COMMENTS: Please be specific:_____

_____

E. Overall Comment: What could have been done differently to make the training sessions more beneficial or helpful to you? (Please use back of page if necessary).

I.D. #__ __ __ __

FOSTER CARE DEMOGRAPHICS

E. DIRECTIONS: Please fill in all blanks with information where needed or circle the correct number where several choices are provided on the next two pages.

1. Last 4 #'s of Social Security # __ __ __ __

2. Circle correct role: 1. worker 2. foster parent
   3. Other_____(please specify)

3. Date __ __ - __ __ - __ __

4. County _____

5. Circle gender: 1. Male 2. Female

6. Circle racial background:
   1. Hispanic
   2. Black, not of Hispanic origin
   3. Asian-American
   4. American Indian
   5. White, not of Hispanic origin
   6. Other:_____

7. Age_____

8. Are you (please circle one): 1. Married 2. Separated 3. Single

9. Number of birth & adopted female children_____

10. Number of birth & adopted male children_____

11. Circle age group of birth & adopted children:
   1. all under 5
   2. all under 10
   3. all under 15
   4. all under 18
   5. all over 18
   6. some under 18 & others over 18
   7. none

12. Highest level of formal education: (please circle one)

   1. some high school
   2. high school graduate
   3. some college
   4. college graduate
   5. Master's degree or higher

13. Within the past year, have you participated in any other foster care training other than Colorado State's Fostering Families?

   1. yes 2. no

Thank you for your help! Your feedback is important for our continuing improvement of the Fostering Families project.

PLEASE CONTINUE TO THE NEXT PAGE

F. DIRECTIONS: Finally! Complete only the section which refers to you as either a Foster Care Parent or Foster Care Worker.

FOSTER CARE PARENT SECTION

14. What type of agency are you employed or licensed through?

    1. County Department of Social Services
    2. Private Child Placing Agency (please specify)_____
    3. Both County Department of Social Services and Private.
    4. Indian/Tribal
    5. Other (please specify) _____

15. Total # of children presently in home_____

16. Number of foster female children_____

17. Number of foster male children_____

18. Circle age group of foster children:
    1. all under 5
    2. all under 10
    3. all under 15
    4. all under 18
    5. all over 18
    6. some under 18 & some over 18
    7. no children now
    8. not yet foster parents
    9. other_____

19. Is at least one parent in the home providing parenting and supervision?
    1. Yes 2. No, Parent(s) have work responsibilities outside of the home.

20. Length of involvement as foster family: _____years

21. Number of foster children for which licensed_____

22. Total number of foster children since being a foster parent_____

23. Circle general age groups of foster children you have served:

    1. 0 - 24 mos.
    2. 1 - 6 years
    3. 0 - 12 years
    4. 0 - 18 years
    5. 0 - 21 years
    6. short term/emergency

.....

FOSTER CARE WORKER SECTION

24. What type of agency are you employed or licensed through?

    1. County Department of Social Services
    2. Private Child Placing Agency (please specify) _____
    3. Indian/Tribal
    4. Other _____ (please specify)

25. Are you currently employed as a foster care worker? 1. Yes 2. No

26. Length of time in current agency _____years

27. Current title:
    1. Caseworker I
    2. Caseworker II
    3. Caseworker III
    4. Supervisor I
    5. Supervisor II
    6. Foster Case Trainer
    7. Other (specify) _____

28. Length of time in current position _____years

29. Length of time in protective services/foster care unit _____years